

“Question” blog writing and students’ reflections: what suggestions to teach writing?

Writing as a tool for dialogue: interrogating students’ writing in blogs

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The two writings and their requirements

Academic writing:

- Clarity of the content (virtual audience)
- Impersonal style
- Formal accuracy

Blog:

- Clarity of the content (real audience, although unknown)
- Immediacy
- Formal accuracy

Values and limits of the two writings

Academic writing:

- Meditated writing
- Negative impact of assessment
- Lack of spontaneity

Blog:

- Immediacy
- Attention to the form

Blog writing is more stimulating, spontaneous and immediate for the students as it doesn't imply assessment and judgements.

Form is accurate because students want to be understood by their peers: *the audience* is stimulating!

For a research on writing and dialogue

Writing at school is not used as a dialogue tool, it is rather a tool to elaborate and expose. Considering that these functions of writing cannot be dropped, how can the new writing enrich the traditional form of school writing? This could be the subject for a research to be undertaken together *with teachers*. The topics:

- School and digital writings: similarities and differences
- School writing and its constraints
- When to use one kind of writing and when the other?

How to approach work on writing:

1. Mastering the tool

- Writing as a tool to elaborate, expose/discuss, communicate. These functions are not antithetic but complementary.
- Lead students to reflect on different kinds of writing, also by comparing examples of the two writings on the same topic.

How to approach work on writing:

2. Writing, reading, evaluating

- Writing and reading are strictly linked: we read what others write: reading as a source of ideas for writing
- Assessment as a useful tool for the whole class, not only for the teacher
- Assessing students' blogs, not only their academic writings

Suggestions for teaching writing

- **Stimulate** students to ask themselves questions, reflect and express themselves about a key issue, allow them to take position and further develop their ideas into messages to be published in blogs.
- After the team-blogging experience, reflection should be continued on what should be carried on.
- **Propose** various topics in order to allow a wider range of discussions for the students, starting from an experience, a text, a video and inviting other classes to comment.
- **Ask** students to comment articles or videos about current topics and stories they can relate to, such as cyberbullism, racial prejudices, conflicts with parents, which are typical of their age.

Parameters to analyze blog writing

Clarity:

- Text organization: cohesion, coherence, punctuation
- Sense of the reader (to make oneself understood)

1 to 5

Communicative effectiveness:

- Sense of the interlocutor: the author asks questions and is willing to interact
- Expressivity

1 to 5

Some problems

- Making the blog a real tool for dialogue
- Finding new meanings for school/academic writing: students write for themselves, not to accomplish a task; they write to others about what they have reflected upon.